



Biden flexible on who gets aid, tells lawmakers to 'go big'

By LISA MASCARO and JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden told Democratic lawmakers Wednesday he's "not married" to an absolute number on his \$1.9 trillion COVID rescue plan but Congress needs to "act fast" on relief for the pandemic and the economic crisis.

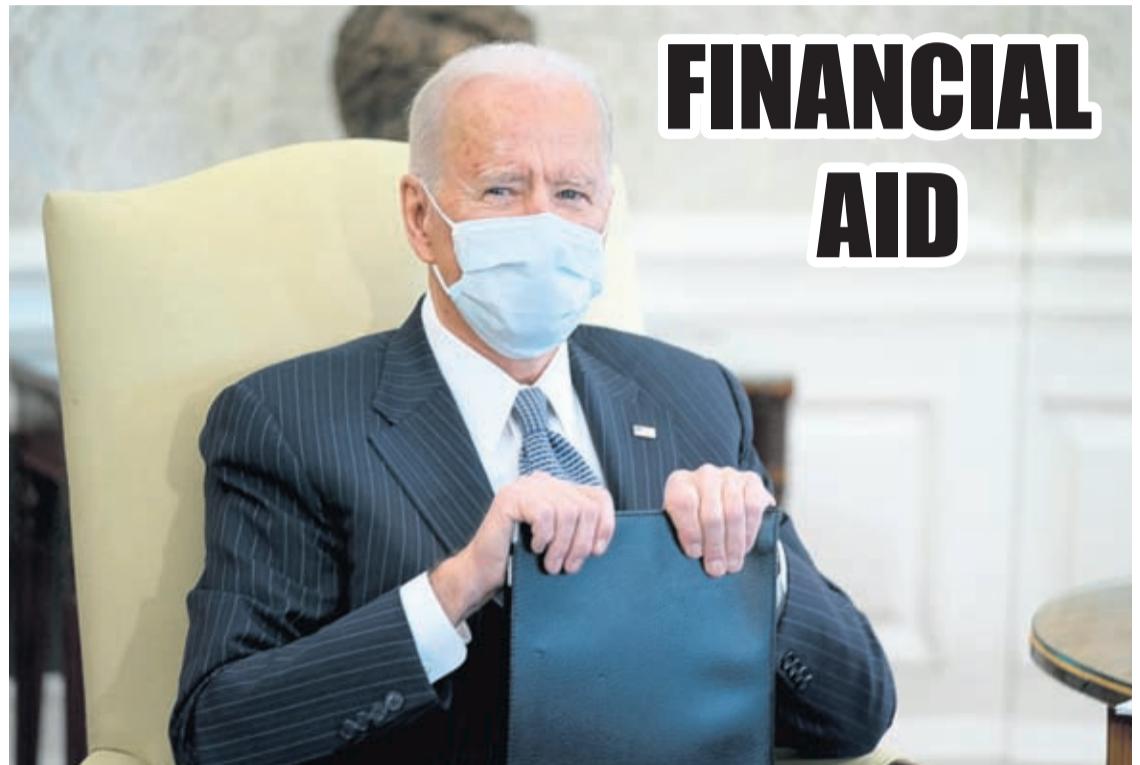
Biden also said he doesn't want to budge from his proposed \$1,400 in direct payments promised to Americans. But he said he is willing to "target" the aid, which would mean lowering the income threshold to qualify for the money.

"Look, we got a lot of people hurting in our country today," Biden said. "We need to act. We need to act fast." Biden said, "I'm not going to start my administration by breaking a promise to the American people."

He spoke with House Democrats and followed with a meeting at the White House with top Senate Democrats, deepening his public engagements with lawmakers on pandemic aid and an economic recovery package. Together they are his first legislative priority and a test of the administration's ability to work with Congress to deliver.

Biden's remarks to the Democratic House caucus were relayed by two people who requested anonymity to discuss the private conference call.

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President Joe Biden meets with Senate Majority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer of N.Y., and other Democratic lawmakers to discuss a coronavirus relief package, in the Oval Office of the White House, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

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Biden flexible on who gets aid, tells lawmakers to 'go big'

Continued from Front

While Biden is trying to build bipartisan support from Republicans, he is also prepared to rely on the Democratic majority in Congress to push his top agenda item into law. Objecting to the president's package as excessive, Republicans proposed a \$618 billion alternative with slimmer \$1,000 direct payments and zero aid for states and cities. But Biden panned the GOP package as insufficient even as he continues private talks with Republicans on potential areas of compromise.

In his meeting with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and 10 top Senate Democrats in the Oval Office, the president expressed confidence that the relief package would still win over GOP votes and be bipartisan.

"I think we'll get some Republicans," he said at the start of the meeting.

With a rising virus death toll and strained economy, the goal is to have COVID-19 relief approved by March, when extra unemployment

assistance and other pandemic aid measures expire. Money for vaccine distributions, direct payments to households, school reopenings and business aid are at stake.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the president fully recognizes the final package may look different than the one he initially proposed.

She said further targeting the \$1,400 payments "means not the size of the check, it means the income level of the people who receive the check." That's under discussion, she said. As lawmakers in Congress begin drafting the details of the package, Biden is taking care to shore up his allies while also ensuring that the final product fulfills his promise for bold relief to a battered nation.

House Democrats were told on the call with the president that they could be flexible on some numbers and programs, but should not back down on the size or scope of the aid. "We have to go big, not small," Biden told the Democrats. "I've got your back,



Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, speaks to family during a ceremony memorializing U.S. Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick, as an urn with his cremated remains lies in honor on a black-draped table at the center of the Capitol Rotunda, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

and you've got mine."

As the White House reaches for a bipartisan bill, House and Senate Democrats have launched a lengthy budget process for approving Biden's bill with or without Republican support. Voting started Tuesday in the Senate and was set for

Wednesday and Thursday in the House.

"We want to do it bipartisan, but we must be strong," Schumer said after the 90-minute session at the White House. Democrats are "working with our Republican friends, when we can."

The swift action follows Tuesday's outreach as Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen joined the Democratic senators for a private virtual meeting, both declaring the Republicans' \$618 billion offer was too small.

Both Biden and Yellen recalled the lessons of the government response to the 2009 financial crisis, which some have since said was inadequate as conditions worsened.

Schumer said of the Republican proposal: "If we did a package that small, we'd be mired in the COVID crisis for years."

Earlier in the week, Biden met with 10 Republican senators who were pitching their \$618 billion alternative, and told them he won't delay aid in hopes of winning GOP support even as talks continue.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell criticized the Democrats for pressing ahead largely on their own as the GOP senators try to provide bipartisan alterna-

tives.

"They've chosen a totally partisan path," McConnell said. "That's unfortunate." The two sides are far apart. The cornerstone of the GOP plan is \$160 billion for the health care response — vaccine distribution, a "massive expansion" of testing, protective gear and money for rural hospitals, similar to what Biden has proposed for aid specific to the pandemic.

But from there, the two plans drastically diverge. Biden proposes \$170 billion for schools, compared with \$20 billion in the Republican plan. Republicans also would give nothing to states, money that Democrats argue is just as important, with \$350 billion in Biden's plan to keep police, fire and other workers on the job.

The GOP's \$1,000 direct payments would go to fewer people — those earning up to \$40,000 a year, or \$80,000 for couples. Biden's bigger \$1,400 payments would extend to higher income levels, up to \$300,000 for some families.

The Republicans offer \$40 billion for Paycheck Protection Program business aid. But gone are Democratic priorities such as a gradual lifting of the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. □

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Virginia Senate passes death penalty abolition bill

By SARAH RANKIN

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The Virginia Senate passed a bill Wednesday that would abolish the death penalty, a measure that if passed into law would mark a major policy change for a state that over its centuries-long history has led the nation in the number of executions it has carried out.

The Democrat-controlled chamber approved the bill in a 21-17 vote that split along party lines and was seen as a key hurdle for the measure. Advocates now expect the House version of the bill to easily clear that chamber, and Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam has said he supports the legislation.

Wednesday's vote followed a lengthy, emotional floor debate.

"I cannot think of anything that is more awful, unspeakable and wrong for a government to do than to use its power to execute somebody who didn't commit the crime they're accused of. The problem with capital punishment is that once it's inflicted you can't take it back, it can't be corrected," Democratic Sen. Scott Surovell, the bill's sponsor, said as he introduced it. Democrats raised concerns about the racial disparities in the application of the death penalty and pointed to research that shows it does not deter crime.



State Sen. Jen Kiggans, R-Virginia Beach, speaks with Sen. Bill Stanley, R-Franklin County, as Senate Bill 1165, relating to abolishing the death penalty, was being discussed as the Senate meets at the Science Museum of Virginia, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Richmond, Va.

Associated Press

Republicans urged a "no" vote on the bill, saying it wouldn't give victims' families a chance at justice and voicing concerns that people convicted of heinous murders would be eligible for parole. GOP Sen. Bill Stanley, who had initially co-patroned the measure, angrily spoke against it after Democrats a day earlier rejected attempts from Republicans to amend the bill, including changes Stanley proposed

that he said would have guaranteed that people convicted of aggravated murder would never leave prison.

"This could have been coming out today as a bipartisan effort to end the death penalty. Instead it's a party-line effort," said Stanley, who also spoke about his personal opposition to the death penalty. He ultimately did not vote. Republican Sen. Mark Obenshain acknowledged

the "misapplications of capital punishment of decades and centuries past" but said that should not be a reason to do away with the punishment entirely. He described the brutal crimes committed by two men formerly on death row: Ivan Teleguz, convicted in 2006 of hiring a man to kill the mother of his child, and Ricky Gray, who was convicted of killing a family of four, slashing their throats and setting their home

ablaze in 2006. Teleguz had his sentence commuted to life without parole in 2017; Gray was executed the same year.

"These are savage crimes. These are the worst of the worst," he said.

Democrat Janet Howell said she used to be a "fervent" supporter of the death penalty, a position that changed after the murder of her father-in-law. She described in emotional testimony how his killing affected her family and how they found themselves in disagreement over the death penalty and the punishment her father-in-law's killer should face.

"I don't buy the idea that we would support the death penalty for the benefit of victims' families. It doesn't work that way. Trust me, it doesn't work that way," she said.

Virginia has executed nearly 1,400 people in more than four centuries, more than any other state, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. In modern times, Virginia is second only to Texas in the number of executions since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976.

But executions have slowed in Virginia in recent years — the last inmate put to death was William Morva in 2017 — and no death sentences have been imposed in the state since 2011. □

After delays, construction on Obama library to start in 2021

By SOPHIA TAREEN

Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Construction of the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago will move forward this year after a four-year federal review and other delays, officials said Wednesday. Former President Barack Obama chose a South Side lakefront park as the site for his presidential library in 2016, not far from where he began his political career, taught law and lived with his family. However, the planning hit numerous snags due to a legal battle with park preserva-

tionists and protests from neighborhood activists who feared the planned \$500 million center would displace Black residents. Chicago's City Council has since approved neighborhood protections, and a four-year federal review process that was needed because of its location in Jackson Park — which is on the National Register of Historic Places — has been completed. "Getting to this point wouldn't have been possible without the folks in the community who have been a part of this process along the way," Obama

said in a video message release Wednesday. "We know that by working together, we can unlock the South Side's fullest potential — and help set up our city, our country, and our world for even better years still to come."

Obama Foundation officials said the city will begin pre-construction work in April, including the relocation of utility lines, with actual construction starting as early as August.

Obama has described the center as a hub for youth programming and public gatherings that will jump-



In this May 3, 2017, file photo, former President Barack Obama speaks at a community event on the Presidential Center at the South Shore Cultural Center in Chicago.

Associated Press

start the economy on the city's South Side, parts of which are impoverished. Obama Foundation offi-

cials estimate the center will help create about 5,000 jobs, both during and after construction. □

Justice Department drops Yale admissions discrimination suit

By COLLEEN LONG and MICHAEL BALSAMO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In another reversal of Trump-era policy, the Biden administration on Wednesday dropped its discrimination lawsuit against Yale University that alleged the Ivy League school was illegally discriminating against Asian American and white applicants.

Federal prosecutors said the Justice Department's underlying investigation, aimed at ensuring Yale complies with federal anti-discrimination laws, continues. The government accused Yale in October of violating civil rights laws because it "discriminates based on race and national origin in its undergraduate admissions process, and that race is the determinative factor in hundreds of admissions decisions each year."

The investigation stemmed from a 2016 complaint by the New Jersey-based Asian American Coalition for Education coalition against Yale, Brown and Dartmouth.

Yale said its practices comply with decades of Supreme Court precedent and that it looks at "the whole person" when deciding which applicants to admit.

A department spokesperson said in a statement that



In this May 24, 2010 file photo, future graduates wait for the procession to begin for commencement at Yale University in New Haven, Conn.

Associated Press

it was dropping the suit "in light of all available facts, circumstances, and legal developments" but didn't specify further. The government also notified Yale that it had withdrawn its determination letter that the university discriminated based on race and national origin. Yale was gratified and pleased by those two developments, spokesperson Karen Peart said.

But Swan Lee, a co-founder of the group behind the complaint, called it "a racist decision because it preserves discrimination in education. It's a setback in our fight against racial dis-

crimination against Asian Americans in education." The change in administrations brought an end to the suit, but the challenge to college admissions policies that take race into account is alive in a case against Harvard's practices. The challengers have lost at each round in the lower courts, but their appeal is expected in the coming weeks at the Supreme Court, where a conservative majority may well be more receptive.

The Yale investigation also found that the university used race as a factor in multiple steps of the ad-

missions process and that Yale "racially balances its classes."

The Supreme Court has ruled colleges and universities may consider race in admissions decisions but has said that must be done in a narrowly tailored way to promote diversity and should be limited in time. Schools also bear the burden of showing why their consideration of race is appropriate.

"I am totally shocked by the Biden DOJ's hasty decision to drop the Yale lawsuit, only eight days after President Biden signed an executive order claiming

to combat anti-Asian discrimination," said Yukong Zhao, the president of the Asian American Coalition for Education.

But the decision was lauded by other civil rights groups, including one run by the Biden administration's incoming assistant attorney general for civil rights. "It has been proven in the courts that race-conscious admissions programs are lawful, and Black students and other students of color who come from all walks of life can rest a little easier knowing our government is looking to lift them up, not divide and suppress," said David Hinojosa, director of the Educational Opportunities Project at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. The group's president, Kristen Clarke, is Biden's nominee to run the Justice Department's civil rights division.

Biden's Justice Department is working to undo Trump policies, including "zero tolerance," the immigration policy that was responsible for family separations. Also Wednesday, the Supreme Court agreed to requests from the Biden administration to put off arguments in two challenges to Trump-era policies involving the U.S.-Mexico border wall and asylum-seekers as Biden works to change the policies that had been challenged in court. □



In this Oct. 14, 2014, file photo, Carlos Rafael talks on the phone at Homer's Wharf near his herring boat F/V Voyager in New Bedford, Mass.

Associated Press

By PATRICK WHITTLE
Associated Press
A legal dispute over the sale of fishing boats once

owned by a disgraced former fishing magnate nicknamed "The Codfather" is headed to state court in

Fate of boats owned by 'The Codfather' heading to court

Massachusetts this month. It's the latest development in a waterfront saga that has dragged on for years in one of busiest fishing ports in the country. Carlos Rafael, whose fishing operations were based out of New Bedford, Massachusetts, was once the owner of one of the largest commercial fishing operations in the U.S.

Rafael was sentenced to nearly four years in prison in 2017 for dodging quotas and smuggling profits overseas. The result of

the government's case against Rafael included forced divestiture of his assets and a permanent ban from commercial fishing. Rafael complied, but a New Bedford fish auction house sued him with a complaint that he didn't honor a right of first refusal agreement to buy boats. The auction house, BASE Inc., filed suit in September 2019, claiming it suffered millions of dollars in damages because it wasn't able to buy the boats. But Rafael, who is on home

confinement near the end of his sentence, maintains he did nothing wrong. His lawyer, John Markey of New Bedford, said he is fighting the suit in court. The case was slated for a pretrial hearing Monday that was postponed by snow, and it is awaiting a new date this month, Markey said. "The Rafaels needed to defend themselves because they were being sued," Markey said. "When you engage in litigation, all the facts are going to come out." □

Canada designates the Proud Boys as a terrorist entity

By ROB GILLIES

Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The Canadian government designated the Proud Boys group as a terrorist entity on Wednesday, noting they played a pivotal role in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

The Proud Boys have faced increased scrutiny after seizing on the former Trump administration's policies and was a major agitator during earlier protests and the Capitol riot on Jan. 6. The Proud Boys is a far-right, male chauvinist extremist group known for engaging in violent clashes at political rallies. Canada is the first country to designate them as a terrorist entity.

During a September presidential debate, Donald Trump had urged the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by" when asked to condemn them by a moderator.

Senior officials speaking on a technical briefing said authorities had been monitoring and collecting evidence about the Proud Boys before the Capitol Hill insurrection, but confirmed that the event provided information that helped with the decision to list the organization.

Public Safety Minister Bill Blair said they revealed themselves.



In this Sept. 7, 2020, file photo, a protester carries a Proud Boys banner, a right-wing group, while other members start to unfurl a large U.S. flag in front of the Oregon State Capitol in Salem, Ore.

Associated Press

"Their intent and their escalation toward violence became quite clear," Blair said.

Asked whether the US will follow Canada and designate Proud Boys as a terrorist entity, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the U.S. has a domestic extremism review underway. "We will wait for that review to conclude before we make any determinations," Psaki said.

The terrorist designation in Canada means the group may have assets seized

and face harsher terrorism-related criminal penalties. A government official said just because they are a member doesn't mean they will be charged with a crime, but if they do engage in violent acts they could be charged with terrorist crimes.

Sending money to the organization or buying Proud Boys paraphernalia would also be a crime.

"The group and its members have openly encouraged, planned, and conducted violent activities

against those they perceive to be opposed to their ideology and political beliefs," the Canadian government said in briefing materials.

The government calls the Proud Boys a neo-fascist organization with semiautonomous chapters located in the United States, Canada, and internationally. It said it engages in political violence and that members espouse misogynistic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and white supremacist ideologies.

"Since 2018 we have seen

an escalation towards violence for this group," Blair said.

"In the aftermath of the U.S. presidential election, we have seen signals of escalation towards violence from a number of different groups including the Proud Boys." Blair said four right-wing groups are among 13 additions to the list, which include three groups linked to al-Qaida, four associated with the Islamic State group and one Kashmiri organization.

"Canada will not tolerate ideological, religious or politically motivated acts of violence," Blair said.

The Proud Boys were formed in 2016 by Canadian Gavin McInnes, who co-founded Vice Media.

In 2018, police arrested several Proud Boys members and associates who brawled with antifascists after McInnes, delivered a speech at New York's Metropolitan Republican Club. McInnes has described the group as a politically incorrect men's club for "Western chauvinists" and denies affiliations with far-right extremist groups that overtly espouse racist and anti-Semitic views. McInnes sued the Southern Poverty Law Center, claiming it defamed him when it designated the Proud Boys as a "hate group." □

North Macedonia: Women protest over online sexual harassment

By KONSTANTIN TESTORIDES

Associated Press

SKOPJE, North Macedonia (AP) — Hundreds of pro-

testers gathered outside North Macedonia's Interior Ministry called on the government Wednesday

to crack down on private messaging groups sharing unauthorized and often explicit photographs and videos of women and girls. The demonstration followed revelations that one chat group on the encrypted platform Telegram was sharing photos and videos with more than 7,000 members. Some users posted the names and addresses of the featured girls and women.

"We're here because we don't feel safe," Kalia Dimitrova, 29, a member of a local human rights group, said at the protest.

"I refuse to accept that I should hide when I'm at-

tacked...This has to end." The Telegram chat group, titled Public Room, was discovered last year and reemerged in January despite assurances by authorities that its activity had been halted.

North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev threatened last week to block Telegram if it refused to provide greater assistance to shut down Public Room and other similar groups.

Interior Minister Oliver Spasovski said four people were recently arrested in connection with the case. The minister gave no further details.

Several women at

Wednesday's protest said their photographs were stolen from hacked social media accounts.

A woman who spoke at the protest and identified herself only as Ana urged authorities to introduce legislation that would reduce online sexual harassment and strengthen police powers.

"It is a high time for this to end," she told the protesters.

"We need legislation for this to provide a better future for us and generations to come."

Telegram could not be immediately reached for comment. □



Young people, wearing face masks and trying to maintain distance, march during a protest through downtown Skopje, North Macedonia, on Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021.

Associated Press

U.K.-E.U. talks aim to defuse Brexit tensions over N. Ireland

By JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP)— Senior politicians from Britain, Northern Ireland and the European Union held inconclusive talks Wednesday in a bid to ease post-Brexit trade tensions that have shaken Northern Ireland's delicate political balance.

British Cabinet minister Michael Gove, European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic and the leaders of Northern Ireland's Catholic-Protestant power-sharing government held a video conference to discuss problems that have erupted barely a month after the U.K. made an economic split from the 27-nation EU. Sefcovic is expected to travel to London next week for more talks.

Northern Ireland authorities halted veterinary checks and withdrew border staff this week from Belfast and Larne ports after threatening graffiti appeared referring to port workers as targets, and staff reported seeing people writing down vehicle license plate numbers.

The border checks on goods entering Northern



A woman walks past past graffiti with the words 'No Irish Sea Border' in Belfast city centre, Northern Ireland, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021.

Associated Press

Ireland from the rest of the U.K. are a contentious product of Brexit.

Since the U.K. left the European Union's economic structures at the end of 2020, customs and veterinary checks have been imposed on goods moving between Britain and the bloc — and on some British goods going to Northern Ireland, because it shares a border with EU member

Ireland. The checks are strongly opposed by pro-British Unionist politicians, who say they drive a wedge between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K. They are calling on the British government to rip up a section of its divorce agreement with the EU known as the Northern Ireland Protocol, which gives the region a separate trade status to the rest of the U.K.

The Democratic Union-

ist Party, which heads the power-sharing Belfast administration, is refusing to cooperate with the Irish government on implementing the new rules.

Northern Ireland Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, from the Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein, accused the DUP of stirring up tension with its "reckless" attacks on the Brexit agreement.

"The DUP needs to step

back from throwing the baby out with the bathwater, what we need to do is be calm, be steady and work our way through these issues," she said.

Police have warned that violent pro-British Loyalists could capitalize on the tensions, though they say the current threat appears to come from a small number of individuals rather than paramilitary groups.

The sensitivity of Northern Ireland's status was underscored last week, when the EU threatened to ban shipments of coronavirus vaccines to Northern Ireland as part of moves to shore up the bloc's supply. That would have drawn a hard border on the island of Ireland — exactly the scenario the Brexit deal was crafted to avoid. British, Irish and Northern Ireland politicians all expressed alarm at the plan, and the EU dropped the idea. The U.K. government is urging the bloc to take a more light-touch approach to border checks, which have already led to shortages and delays in getting some goods to Northern Ireland. In a letter to Sefcovic, □

UN report: Widespread torture of detainees in Afghan prisons

By TAMEEM AKHGAN

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)— Nearly a third of all detainees held in Afghan detention centers say they have suffered some form of torture or ill-treatment, a new U.N. report said Wednesday.

According to the "Torture Report," more than half of the allegations are from southern Kandahar province, a Taliban heartland. The United Nations expressed serious concerns about the claims, including allegations of "enforced disappearances."

For the report, conducted jointly by the U.N. mission to Afghanistan and the U.N. Human Rights Office, U.N. officials interviewed a total of 656 detainees, held in 63 government facilities across the country,

between January 2019 and March 2020.

The alleged torture included beatings, suffocation, and electric shocks.

The U.N. says 30% of those interviewed provided "credible and reliable" accounts of abuse and mistreatment.

Afghan officials did not immediately respond to Associated Press calls for comment on the U.N. report. Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, U.N. visits to the detention facilities were suspended last March.

The U.S.-backed Afghan government is holding thousands of detainees, many of them captured as part of the ongoing war with the Taliban, who are mainly ethnic Pashtun.

The Taliban have stepped up their offensive, mak-

ing major gains in recent years, and now effectively control over half the country. Separately, widespread corruption and distrust of the government has undermined efforts to combat the Taliban.

The insurgents, meanwhile, have been demanding the release of thousand more Taliban prisoners, under a deal signed between the Taliban and the U.S. government last year that saw 5,000 insurgents freed. The U.S.-Taliban deal aims to end the decades-long war and facilitate the withdrawal of U.S. and international troops from Afghanistan. The Biden administration has said it plans to review the U.S.-Taliban deal. The report said 30.3% of detainees reported torture or mistreatment, down from 31.9 % during the previ-

ous reporting period, from 2017 to 2018.

"Perpetrators must be held accountable," said Deborah Lyons, the U.N.'s special representative for Afghanistan. "This would increase confidence in

the rule of law and can be a contributing factor towards peace," said Lyons.

"Torture can never be justified. It has lasting consequences for victims, their families, and society," she added. □



In this Jan. 11, 2018 file photo, Afghan prisoners prepare to be released from Pul-e-Charkhi prison, in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Associated Press

Haiti opens debate on proposed constitutional changes

By EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— Haiti has unveiled multiple proposed changes to overhaul the country's Constitution that officials plan to present to voters starting this week for an upcoming referendum that looms amid growing unrest. The public meetings are scheduled to be held across Haiti for the next three weeks, ahead of the April 25 constitutional referendum, which would be the first one held in more than 30 years.

One of the biggest changes is an omission in the draft issued by an independent commission tasked with creating the constitutional changes that have generated heated debates. Haiti's current Constitution bars presidents from serving two consecutive terms, but the draft only states that a president cannot serve for more than two terms; it says nothing about whether they can be served consecutively.

Human rights attorney Bill



In this Oct. 8, 2019 file photo, entrepreneur and youth leader Pascéus Juvensky St. Fleur, 26, holds up his copy of the Haitian constitution during an interview in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Associated Press

O'Neill told The Associated Press that his interpretation is that the omission would allow a president to serve two terms consecutively. He noted that those who drafted the 1987 Constitution currently in use were emerging from a 29-year dictatorship under two so-called "presidents for life": François Duvalier and

Jean-Claude Duvalier. "The drafters were very wary of allowing anyone having too much unbroken time in the Presidency," he said.

The new draft also drops the requirement that to be president of Haiti, one needs to have lived in the country for five consecutive years prior to the date

of general elections. All it says is that one "must have habitual residence in Haiti," a change that could allow the diaspora to run for the highest offices in Haiti, which is currently banned. The proposed change also would apply to the position of vice president.

Other proposed changes include creating the posi-

tion of a vice president to replace that of prime minister and establishing a unicameral legislature to be elected every five years to replace the current Senate and Chamber of Deputies, which was largely dissolved more than a year ago when President Jovenel Moïse began to rule by decree following a lack of legislative elections.

Another change also calls for legislators to be elected every five years to match the presidential term since some senators are currently elected every two to six years. Critics of the proposed changes say they see it as a power grab by Moïse, who says he will step down in February 2022 when his five-year term ends. The opposition, however, argues that his term began when that of former President Michel Martelly ended in February 2016, even though Moïse wasn't sworn in until February 2017 following a chaotic election process that led to the appointment of a provisional president for one year. □

Common pots prepared by neighbors feeding thousands in Peru

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO
Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — At dawn, Genoveva Satalaya and her neighbors walk through Lima's food markets hoping to find a kind merchant who will donate food to help fill the "common pot" that is feeding

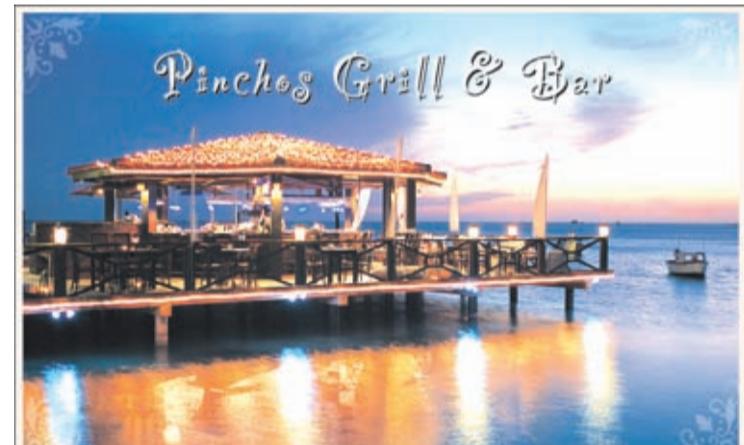
their neighborhood. The survival strategy that first appeared in Peru's capital during the country's civil conflict four decades ago has been vital since the coronavirus pandemic arrived in this South American nation. With the country again under a

lockdown, Satalaya's pot is feeding 120 people, including seniors, children and pregnant women. Satalaya and her neighbors prepare lunch Monday through Friday. There's not enough food for weekday breakfasts or dinners or weekend meals. "We don't have meat, not even a tuna," Satalaya, a 45-year-old mother of two, said Tuesday while she and her neighbors cooked rice and potatoes for lunch. The common pots, also seen in other Latin American countries, have emerged as a symbol of the struggles of the region. Thousands of them are in use throughout Peru at levels not seen since the 1980s and 1990s during the armed conflict between the state and the Shining Path terrorist group. □



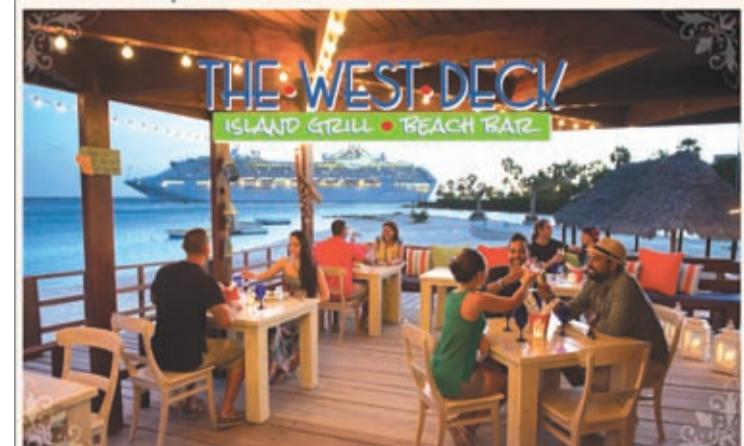
A banner announces the Los Alamos soup kitchen asking for donations in the Villa Maria neighborhood in Lima, Peru, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2021, amid a second complete lockdown in less than a year as Peru battles a resurgence in COVID-19 cases.

Associated Press



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Oranjestad — This year is the year of the creative industry, thus also the year of creative artists and entrepreneurs. Today we are catching up with the new upcoming young Aruban artist in the Netherlands who is breaking the ceiling in the fine arts. The Creative Islander interviewed Roslyn Schwengle to find out what she is currently up to and how this could contribute to a dynamic Aruban creative industry in the future. We want to support our artist and especially the new generation of artists. Covid-19 has been devastating for the cultural sector, but read how Roslyn has managed to transform darkness to light and her message to other young artists on Aruba.

Who is Roslyn Schwengle?

"My name is Roslyn Schwengle and I am 22 years old. I am an Aruban artist finishing my Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts at the Hanze Hogeschool Academy Minerva in Groningen, the Netherlands. In 2017 I received the opportunity to further my studies and without hesitation, I left my beloved island to pursue my dreams. From a young age I used to enjoy painting and seek for creative and artistic ways to express my emotions. Never would I thought that I am becoming an emerging artist and how art could change my life. I am very much known for my ambitious character, cautious instincts, humility, kindness, and my critical and analytical thinking. Now I can say that my hard work is paying off and that is the biggest lesson I could have learned."

What is the Green Light exhibition? Why is it so important?

"The Green light exhibition is a yearly event hosted by Academy Minerva that determines if a student can receive a "green light" to the next phase of graduation and participate in the final graduation show. It is the culmination of the years of hard work students have displayed. In the event that you receive a "red light" you are then not allowed to graduate. So, you can imagine how nerve-wracking this is for most students. Minerva Academy's Green Light Exhibition is organized by the exam committee of the Department of Fine Arts. This year the exhibition had 55 participants ranging from different artistic disciplines and backgrounds. Due to the pandemic, this year it had to be a bit different. The participants displayed around 53 works offline and 55 works online. It is also the first time that Minerva displayed an exhibition in the center of Groningen situated at Herenstraat in the building known as "men at work".

"Tenderness of Strength": How Roslyn Schwengle turned darkness to light through art

Next to this, the green light team, including myself, organized the entire event independently from the school. This was approved by the Director of Minerva Academy, Jose de Lang who has our development as young artists from the beginning. From looking for a venue, curation, funding, promotion, concept, transport, including our digital platform which included information on the artist pages supported by a 360 degree walkthrough. We even collaborated with designers in the Department of Design who helped us program the website from scratch. The Green light's exhibition was inaugurated on January 31st 2021 and will be available until February 6th 2021. Together we innovated and made history within an unprecedented pandemic. Even though we could not receive and host visitors in person, we welcomed even more people by going online.

The Green light is very important to be because it will determine my future career. We organized this event to motivate and give hope to the world through our creativity and passion. With the inspiration of the art compass, my colleagues and I could ourselves and our artistic disciplines to the world. Some-

thing that is just precious and rewarding."

What did you display in the exhibition?

"In this exhibition I presented "Tenderness of Strength" (Ink on acid-free paper 21 x 29, 7 cm) and "Darkness of Day" (Paint on textile 143cm x 195cm). 'Tenderness of Strength' includes aspects of vulnerability and bravery, such as when we face obstacles that frighten or intimidate us and observing them from another perspective. In life, hardships and challenges are common. However, through these situations, we discover parts of ourselves, grow, and ultimately prosper. The purpose of my work is to facilitate a space where my audience can self-reflect. Tenderness springs from strength and capacity, but there are extra qualities and depth that can only come from a heart that has experienced its own vulnerability and pain. This experience of being "tenderized" can strengthen us, and also help us become more tender in loving, not only others but ourselves. With "Darkness of Day" I wanted to illustrate my journey up until greenlights. With the message that life continuous even in darkness."

Continued on Page 9

"Tenderness of Strength": How Roslyn Schwengle turned darkness to light through art

Continued from Page 8

How do you feel after the exhibition?

"I feel so grateful for my journey and all that I have accomplished so far. Furthermore, I am grateful for everyone who has believed in my dreams as much as I have. After 6 months of hard work, my team and I made history and displayed a groundbreaking artistic exhibition. This is something I will take with me moving forward. This experience has taught me a lot and it is such a privilege to share that with an audience. I worked hard, did my best and presented my work, and after so many challenges in my trajectory I can finally say: that I have received my "greenlight" to move to the final stage of my graduation."

What is your message for Aruba?

"My beloved Island, admire and value our culture. Our cultural heritage and expression must continue. Learn our history and recognize our artistic talents. If you love to sing, dance, paint, or any form of creative expression, don't stop. Any form of expression doesn't cost you anything besides happiness. Aruban artists, professionals, and also young adults, take the courage to follow your dream, believe in yourself, and make a difference in our community. Like they say "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result". Recognize your worth, and become the light you want to see in our society. Concentrate on what is necessary at the moment and love yourself

unconditionally.

Like I have learned, even in darkness life continuous, and so will Aruba."

How does the future look like for you?

"My main goal at the moment is to graduate and earn my Bachelor degree in Fine Arts in 2021. I see myself developing my passion further and working in this field of arts. My dream is to paint big murals and to display my work in different museums and galleries. How I am going to get there I am not sure, but with faith I know I will achieve my goals."

The creative Islander would like to congratulate Roslyn with her well-earned success. Wishing you nothing but abundant achievements moving forward. Keep doing what you love and what you are passionate about. Aruba needs your support in the future in developing a dynamic and innovative cultural and creative industry. Sending all the support and admiration!

If you want to support Roslyn's beautiful work and see her journey, visit her website: roslynschwengle.com or find her on social media platforms. □



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LUZERNE, SWITZERLAND — The talented Aruban youngster Mariël Willems is one of the finalists to compete at the re-known Youth Culinary Competition (YCO) for the IIHM, International Young Chef Olympiad. Willems, after graduating from EPI in Aruba last year, continued her study at Luzerne, Switzerland, where she studied at a higher education level at the culinary faculty Business and Hotel Management School (B.H.M.S.). The school is a frequent par-

ticipant at YCO and many students have taken part in this international competi-

tion. In this case the winner for Switzerland was our own Aruban Mariël Willems.



Aruban represents Switzerland at International Culinary Championship

The YCO competition celebrates the diversity and multi culture of all culinary around the world. This will be the seventh edition, which due to the pandemic will take place virtually. A total of 50 countries will take part of this, including Switzerland, who is being represented by an Aruban.

Every participant must prepare the three dishes in their own kitchen in the time stipulated. The judges will be monitoring the whole process. Some of the well-known judges are Chef John Wood from UK, Chef Andreas Muller of Hong Kong and Chef Enzo Oliveri from Italy. Willems successfully finished the challenges and is one of the finalists of this competition. Other categories in this competition are 'Best Vegetarian Dish', 'Best Hygiene Practice' and 'Sustainability'.

The competition is organized by the International



Institute of Hotel Management, which is homebased in India, together with the International Hospitality Council London and started last Sunday. It consists of two rounds. The winner will take home a trophy and the prize money of 10.000 dollars. They will be acknowledged for their ability also by well-known experts of the culinary and hospitality industry. □

Aruba Featured In World's Best Island's for Remote Working 2021

ORANJESTAD — It's no surprise that the world of remote workers and digital nomads is growing at a rapid rate. With more and

more yearning for an independent work environment coupled with the freedom to travel, remote working is on its way to the main-

stream field. Not to mention, the ongoing pandemic has especially forced many to reconsider where they are basing themselves. Simply

put, remote working is the future, and it's on its way fast. That's why Global travel site Big 7 Travel put together a list of the best cities and islands to work from remotely in 2021.

As the global shift to remote working shows no sign of switching back, workers across the world are leaving behind the traditional office setup to WFH permanently - and for many, that means relocating! In the US, at least, 20% of the current workforce are freelance workers and that number has been predicted to grow to 40% by the mid-2020s. So, where will people want to answer emails from? Aruba is listed at #37 in the list:

"37. Aruba

Aruba, whose national slogan is "One Happy Island" has launched a remote worker visa which they've

aptly coined the "One Happy Workation" program. The Dutch Caribbean island is famous for its pristine beaches and lively locals who are sure to make you feel right at home. To qualify, you'll need to prove that you are employed by a foreign company or are self-employed to ensure you won't be taking any Aruban jobs. Fair enough, right? They've even sweetened the deal with several Wi-Fi stations throughout the island and hotels that are offering packages to fit your office needs. Plus, for an island nation, the cost of living is extremely reasonable."

Source: <https://bigseven-travel.com/best-places-remote-working/>

For more information about a workation in Aruba you may contact the site: <https://www.aruba.com/us/one-happy-workation/> □



Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos may step down without stepping away

By JOSEPH PISANI and
MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Business Writers

Even after stepping aside as CEO, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos appears likely to keep identifying new frontiers for the world's dominant e-commerce company. His successor, meanwhile, gets to deal with escalating efforts to curtail its power. Tuesday's announcement that Bezos will hand off the CEO job this summer came as a surprise. But it doesn't mean Amazon is losing the visionary who turned an online bookstore founded in 1995 into a behemoth worth \$1.7 trillion that sometimes seems to do a little bit of everything.

Bezos, 57, has never let Amazon rest on its laurels. In the last year alone, it bought a company developing self-driving taxis; launched an online pharmacy selling inhalers and insulin; and won government approval to put more than 3,200 satellites into space to beam internet service to Earth.

Long-time Amazon executive Andy Jassy will be the new CEO, but Bezos will be the company's executive chairman — corporate-speak for board leaders who, unlike most, stay involved in key operational decisions. Think Robert Iger at Disney, Howard Schultz at Starbucks, or Eric Schmidt at Google after handing off the reins a



In this Sept. 19, 2019, file photo, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos speaks during his news conference at the National Press Club in Washington.

Associated Press

decade ago. "Jeff Bezos has held a firm grip on the company for a long time," said Ken Perkins, president of RetailMetrics LLC, a retail research firm. "I have to believe he will have a say in what is going on and have a big hand in big picture decisions." Amazon's chief financial officer, Brian Olsavsky, made the move sound like a mere shuffling of chairs. "It's more of a restructuring of who's doing what," he said during a Tuesday call with reporters. Investors didn't bail after hearing about Amazon's forthcoming change in command, and instead focused on the compa-

ny's blockbuster earnings, which it also announced Tuesday. Amazon's stock edged up slightly in Tuesday's extended trading — not something that tends to happen when Wall Street is worried about a management shake-up. "I don't think he's going to be completely hands off," CFRA analyst Tuna Amobi said of Bezos. In a blog post, Bezos said the CEO job had pulled him away from exploring new ideas and initiatives that could yield growth opportunities. He now intends to focus more on such innovation, along with other ventures such as his rocket

ship company Blue Origin and his newspaper, The Washington Post. "Being the CEO of Amazon is a deep responsibility, and it's consuming," Bezos wrote. "When you have a responsibility like that, it's hard to put attention on anything else." The shift will saddle Jassy with some of the responsibilities that Bezos clearly didn't enjoy. Perhaps the most daunting is the increasing scrutiny of Amazon's clout in an online shopping market that has become even more essential to consumers during the past year's pandemic. The U.S. government al-

ready has slapped two other technology powerhouses, Google and Facebook, with antitrust lawsuits. Both regulators and lawmakers have left little doubt that they are taking a hard look at whether similar action is warranted against Amazon and Apple.

Jassy will likely have to ward off the antitrust threat while also trying to forge his own legacy. A revered company founder can cast a long shadow. "Amazon's size makes some industries uncomfortable, some governments uncomfortable and Andy Jassy will have to deal with the consequences," Gartner analyst Ed Anderson said. "That will be some of the new era of his leadership." Jassy also may face pressure from critics who believe Amazon's success has been built in part by mistreating many of its 1.3 million employees, especially those in the distribution warehouses and delivery trucks who are paid far less than the tech engineers while also facing more hazardous conditions. "Jeff Bezos' departure as CEO is a chance for Amazon to turn over a new leaf," said Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen, an activist group that in Washington. "It should start by paying all its workers a living wage and ensuring they have safe and healthy working conditions." □

Anheuser-Busch investing \$1B to modernize US facilities

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Business Writer

Anheuser-Busch said Wednesday it's investing \$1 billion over the next two years to modernize its U.S. facilities.

Nearly half that amount will go to the company's 12 major U.S. breweries, including its 169-year-old flagship brewery in St. Louis. Anheuser-Busch said it will spend \$100 million for new can lines and \$100 million on solar panel installation and other sustainability measures.

Anheuser-Busch, a subsidiary of Belgium-based AB InBev, said the investment

will be spread across facilities in 26 states.

The company has more than 120 facilities and 19,000 employees in the U.S.

Anheuser-Busch said it also plans to spend \$50 million to increase its seltzer brewing capabilities. U.S. sales of hard seltzers like White Claw and Bon Viv — which is made by Anheuser-Busch — have grown rapidly in recent years even as beer sales have declined.

Consumption of ready-to-drink beverages — a category that includes canned cocktails and hard seltzers — rose an estimated

43% in 2020, according to a study of 19 countries by IWSR Drinks Market Analysis, a London consulting firm. Beer and wine consumption both fell 9%.

Anheuser-Busch's Super Bowl ads will reflect that trend this year, with spots for Bud Light Seltzer Lemonade and Michelob Ultra Organic Seltzer in the lineup. Anheuser-Busch isn't the only big company shifting to meet demand for seltzer. Coca-Cola Co. — which sells only a handful of alcoholic beverages around the world — will soon launch Topo Chico Hard Seltzer in the U.S. □



In this Friday, April 8, 2016, file photo, aluminum Bud Light bottles move along a conveyor at a plant manufacturing 16-ounce Budweiser and Bud Light aluminum bottles for Anheuser-Busch, in Arnold, Mo.

Associated Press

Study finds COVID-19 vaccine may reduce virus transmission

By DANICA KIRKA and LAURAN NEERGAARD
Associated Press

AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine does more than prevent people from falling seriously ill — it appears to reduce transmission of the virus and offers strong protection for three months on just a single dose, researchers said Wednesday in an encouraging turn in the campaign to suppress the outbreak.

The preliminary findings from Oxford University, a co-developer of the vaccine, could vindicate the British government's controversial strategy of delaying the second shot for up to 12 weeks so that more people can be quickly given a first dose. Up to now, the recommended time between doses has been four weeks.

The research could also bring scientists closer to an answer to one of the big questions about the vaccination drive: Will the vaccines actually curb the spread of the coronavirus? It's not clear what implications, if any, the findings might have for the two other major vaccines being used in the West, Pfizer's and Moderna's.

In the United States, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, dismissed the idea of deliberately delaying second shots, saying the U.S. will "go by the science" and data from the clinical trials. The two doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are supposed to be given three and four weeks apart.

Still, the research appears to be good news in the desperate effort to curb the spread of the virus and also suggests a way to ease vaccine shortages and get



AstraZeneca vaccine is ready to be used at a homeless shelter in Romford, east London, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021.

shots into more arms more quickly.

The makers of all three vaccines have said that the shots proved in clinical trials to be anywhere from 70% to 95% effective in protecting people from illness caused by the virus. But it was unclear whether the vaccines could also suppress transmission of the virus — that is, whether someone inoculated could still acquire the virus without getting sick and spread it to someone else.

As a result, experts have been saying that even people who have been vaccinated should continue to wear masks and keep their distance from others.

Oxford's study, however, found that the vaccine not only prevented severe disease but appeared to cut transmission of the virus by two-thirds. The study has not been peer-reviewed yet.

Volunteers in the study underwent regular nasal swabs. The level of virus-

positive swabs — from both those who had COVID-19 symptoms and those who had none — was 67% lower in the vaccinated group.

"That's got to have a really beneficial effect on transmission," Oxford lead researcher Sarah Gilbert said at a meeting of the New York Academy of Sciences. The researchers also looked at how likely people who have been vaccinated are to get a symptom-free infection. In one subset of volunteers, there were 16 asymptomatic infections among the vaccinated and 31 in an unvaccinated comparison group.

Pfizer and Moderna also are studying the effect of their vaccines on asymptomatic infections.

Only the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are being used in the United States. Britain is using both AstraZeneca's and Pfizer's. AstraZeneca's has also been authorized by the 27-nation European Union. Pfizer has not endorsed the British government's decision to lengthen the time between doses.

Mene Pangalos, executive vice president of biopharmaceuticals research and development at AstraZeneca, said that no patients experienced severe COVID-19 or required hospitalization three weeks after receiving a first dose, and that efficacy appeared to

increase up to 12 weeks after the initial shot.

"Our data suggest you want to be as close to the 12 weeks as you can" for the second dose, Pangalos said.

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the study "backs the strategy that we've taken" to make sure more people have gotten at least one shot to protect them. Britain's decision has been criticized as risky by other European countries. He said that the authors themselves acknowledged their research was not designed to investigate the vaccine's dosing schedule and that their conclusions were based on statistical modeling, not actual patients tracked over time.

"It certainly isn't very strong evidence, but there is also no indication this is the wrong thing to do," Evans said of Britain's decision to delay second doses.

One of the lead Oxford researchers, Dr. Andrew Pollard, said scientists also believe the AstraZeneca vaccine will continue to offer protection against new variants of COVID-19, although they are still waiting for data on that. Fast-spreading mutant versions of the virus have caused alarm around the world.

"If we do need to update the vaccines, then it is actually a relatively straightforward process. It only takes

a matter of months, rather than the huge efforts that everyone went through last year to get the very large-scale trials run," Pollard told the BBC.

Meanwhile, a U.N.-backed program to supply COVID-19 vaccines to the neediest people worldwide is gearing up after a troubled start. The COVAX Facility announced plans Wednesday for an initial distribution of some 100 million doses by the end of March and more than 200 million more by the end of June to dozens of countries.

Nearly all of the doses expected for the first phase are due to come from AstraZeneca and its partner, the Serum Institute of India. The AstraZeneca vaccine rollout will be contingent on the World Health Organization authorizing the shot for emergency use, which is expected to happen this month.

Some 190 countries and territories are participating in COVAX, which has seen rich nations scoop up vaccine supplies, sometimes at premium prices.

The pandemic's worldwide death toll has eclipsed 2.2 million, including about 447,000 in the U.S., according to Johns Hopkins University data.

New cases per day in the U.S. and the number of Americans in the hospital with COVID-19 have dropped sharply in the past few weeks, but deaths are still running at close to all-time highs at an average of around 3,100 a day. Deaths often lag behind the infection curve, because it can take weeks to sicken and die from COVID-19.

As the Super Bowl approaches, Fauci is warning viewers to "just lay low and cool it" to avoid turning Sunday's big game into a super spreader event.

Dr. Anthony Fauci said Wednesday that now isn't the time to invite people over for Super Bowl parties.

"You don't want parties with people that you haven't had much contact with," he told NBC's "Today" show. "You just don't know if they're infected." □

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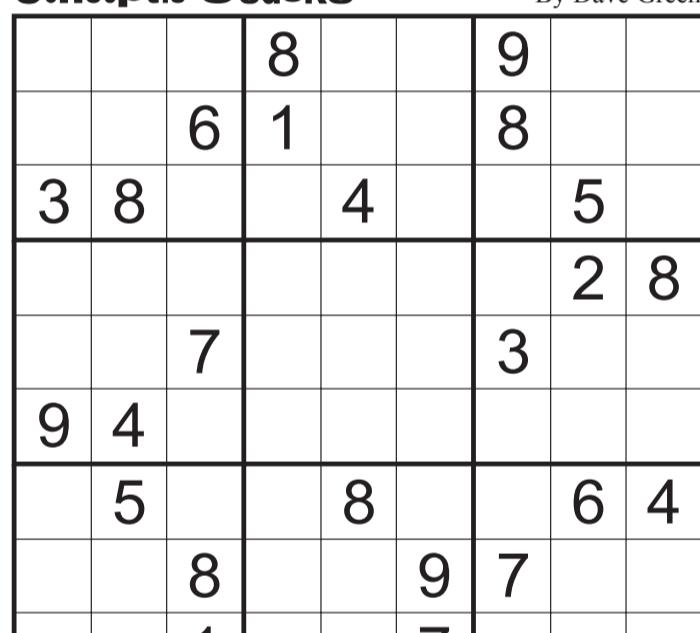
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By Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★★★

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Snoopy shines in Apple TV+ series that's true to its roots

By MARK KENNEDY

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Peanuts" star Snoopy is famous for being a highly imaginative dog, liable at to go off on loony flights of fancy. But, it turns out, his world has some strict rules.

No adults can be heard there, just trombones. No technology past the 1970s can be used. And under no circumstances may the inside of Snoopy's doghouse ever be shown.

Creators of the new animated series "The Snoopy Show" had to learn and respect all the rules as they crafted stories for Apple TV+ that were true to the original strips and various previous shows.

"I think the rules have actually made the story so much stronger, to go, 'How do we play in the sandbox?'" says Stephanie Betts, an executive vice president at media company WildBrain. "And actually, we realized it was so much wider than you can even imagine."

The series, which debuts Friday, consists of three seven-minute vignettes per 23-minute episode. They are mined from the almost 18,000 strips cartoonist Charles M. Schulz left behind.

It's an enchanting and endearing show; we see Charlie Brown overcoming his nerves at speaking in front of his class, and an epic game of tag between



This image released by Apple shows animated characters Snoopy, left, and Woodstock from the original series "The Snoopy Show," premiering Feb. 5 on Apple TV+.

Snoopy and Rerun that leads to mild injuries and laughter.

Adults will recognize the classic visual style and the world they read as kids: Kites still get eaten by trees, Lucy's psychiatric booth still costs a nickel and Snoopy keeps flying missions on his doghouse.

"There's something to the timelessness of Charles Schulz's drawings," said Mark Evestaff, showrunner and an executive producer. "I feel like this is the kind of show that we need now."

The series' writers were each given a large red volume — nicknamed "the Snoopy Bible" — that contained Snoopy-centric strips, and were told to use them for inspiration.

"It was like, 'How do you build on what he was trying to tell the audience in four strips?' We get seven minutes," said Betts.

If the writers were intimidated, so were the artists, many of whom revere "Peanuts."

"One of our storyboard artists would get nervous every time they had to draw Lucy's psychiatry booth, just because it was this heritage thing and there's so much weight. Everyone's a little bit terrified," said Evestaff.

One obstacle was that Woodstock and Snoopy in the strip communicate their feelings through thought bubbles, something that doesn't work in a show.

That meant the artists had to rely on sounds, pantomime and a variety of expressions for the two characters, who yelp, cry, titter and gulp with powerful emotion. They're aided by a jazzy score by Jeff Morrow.

"The Snoopy Show" is a refreshing addition to a children's TV landscape that is full of superheroes and cute shows where resolutions are predetermined. The world of "Peanuts," on the other hand, explores failure and frustration.

"We do have these characters that have real problems and things don't always work out. And they deal with issues of rejection and failure. Those are things that our kids deal with, too," said Evestaff. "I think if you were to pitch a show like this today, it would be a

Associated Press

very difficult sell."

The show still allows Snoopy to have his heroic flights of fancy — becoming the famed arm-wrestler Masked Marvel, hipster Joe Cool or the dogged World War I Flying Ace behind enemy lines.

"Charles Schulz always said he felt most like Charlie Brown — he couldn't always kick the football, he wasn't always the winner. So Snoopy gave that outlet to dream a little bigger," said Betts.

"Peanuts" made its debut Oct. 2, 1950. The travails of the "little round-headed kid" Charlie Brown and his pals eventually ran in more than 2,600 newspapers, reaching millions of readers in 75 countries.

Other Peanuts projects that have been launched by Apple TV+ include "Snoopy in Space" and "Peanuts in Space: Secrets of Apollo 10," both of which were nominated for Daytime Emmy Awards, with the latter winning.

One of the more intriguing aspects of "The Snoopy Show" is that it shows the first time Charlie Brown met Snoopy, as well as the first time the beagle ever encountered Woodstock.

Snoopy is shown as a lonely puppy inside a barn — the last of the litter to be adopted — when Charlie Brown walks in and hands him a bone, telling him they're going to be best friends. □

Young reader's edition of Michelle Obama's book out in March



Michelle Obama, right, appears with Oprah Winfrey to discuss her book "Becoming" during her book tour in Chicago on Nov. 14, 2018.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Michelle Obama's "Becoming" is heading for new chapters. Penguin Random House

announced Wednesday that the former first lady's multimillion-selling memoir will be released in a young

readers edition. It also will finally be coming out as a paperback, more than two years after it was first published. "Becoming" has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide.

Both books are scheduled for March 2. The young readers edition is for ages 10 and up and includes a new introduction from Obama.

"Growing up on the South Side of Chicago in the 1960s and '70s, my parents, Fraser and Marian Robinson, always kept it straight with me and my brother, Craig. They never sugar-

coated hard truths or presented their reality as anything other than what it was — because they knew we could handle it. I want to give you all that same respect," she writes.

"So my promise to you is to give you my story in all its messy glory — from the time I struggled in front of my kindergarten class, to my first kiss and the insecurities I felt growing up, to the chaos of a campaign trail, to the strange experience of shaking hands with the Queen of England. . . . I hope that as you're reading my story, you'll also think

about your own — because it's the most beautiful gift you'll ever have."

The paperback edition also features a new introduction by the author, along with a book club guide. □

1	7	4	8	5	2	9	3	6
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3	8	2	9	4	6	1	5	7
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9	4	5	2	3	8	6	7	1
7	5	9	3	8	1	2	6	4
4	6	8	5	2	9	7	1	3
2	3	1	4	6	7	5	8	9

Difficulty Level ★★★

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DeChambeau flattered by role in golf's rule-change proposals

By STEVE DOUGLAS

AP Sports Writer

Bryson DeChambeau has been pushing the limits of golf with his quest for increased distance off the tee.

So the game's "mad scientist" is flattered that rule-makers are proposing changes to regulations in an effort to control how far big hitters like him can launch a golf ball.

"I think I might be pushing them a little bit," a smiling DeChambeau said Wednesday. "I don't know if anybody's pushed them like — and I'm not really trying to push. ... I think that I'm willing to try things that people are not OK with trying."

"When you go to the fringe limits of the rules," he added, "there will be conversations about it, for sure."

The USGA and the R&A on Tuesday announced three proposals and six areas of interest involving the modern game. This comes one year after their "Distance Insights Project" revealed a steady increase in distance for more than 100 years — with average gains of about 30 yards by PGA Tour players in the last 25 years — and golf courses that keep expanding.

Rory McIlroy, speaking from the Phoenix Open, said the governing bodies were looking at the game through a "tiny lens."

"What they're trying to do

is change something that pertains to 0.1% of the golfing community; 99.9% of the people play this game for enjoyment, for entertainment. They don't need to be told what ball or clubs to use," McIlroy said. "We have to make the game as easy and approachable as possible for the majority of golfers."

McIlroy said he thought the distance project has been "a huge waste of time and money."

"Because that money that it's cost to do this report could have been way better distributed to getting people into the game, introducing young kids to the game, introducing minorities to the game," he said.

Intent on not targeting player-related factors such as improved athleticism, the governing bodies are instead looking closer at golf equipment as they seek solutions to limiting distances. Among the possibilities is a local rule that could limit the length of the shaft to no more than 46 inches, down from 48 inches. DeChambeau had been testing a 48-inch driver, though he has yet to use it in competition.

"It's funny, I'm sure there's a lot of excitement about me having a potentially controversial thought on it, but I don't," said DeChambeau, speaking on a video call from Saudi Arabia, where he is competing in



Bryson DeChambeau lines up his putt on the ninth green during the third round of the Tournament of Champions golf event, Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021, at Kapalua Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii.

Associated Press

the Saudi International on the European Tour starting Thursday. "I think it's a really cool thought process. It's a little flattering, in a sense, because I did talk about that 48-inch driver for so long, and it just didn't work for me the way I wanted it to.

"As it's played out, I think it's really cool to see that there's some change off of the conversations that I've had."

The American has added more than 40 pounds of muscle and mass in the last year — through changes to his diet and hard work in the gym — to enable him to overpower golf courses,

like he did when he won his first major, a six-shot victory in the U.S. Open at Winged Foot in September.

For him, the most important thing is that the rule-change proposals do not remove the "human element."

"It's about making sure that you're playing with the relative integrity of back in the day," he said. "People weren't using 48-inch shafts a long time ago, and so they are really trying to make it similar to back in the day in a sense while having a modern flair to it obviously with the graphite shafts and all that."

McIlroy said he would not

object to a local rule that would apply at the elite level in limiting technology, or what he said would be "some sort of bifurcation."

"But we are such a tiny portion of golf," he said. "Golf is way bigger than the professional game. It's the other stuff that really matters, and that's the stuff they need to concentrate on."

DeChambeau spoke to other technology — his oxygen intake. The U.S. Open champion was favored to win the Masters in November but fell away after complaining of feeling dizzy and something being wrong with his stomach. □

AP source: Twins reach 1-year, \$13M deal with DH Nelson Cruz

By DAVE CAMPBELL

AP Sports Writer

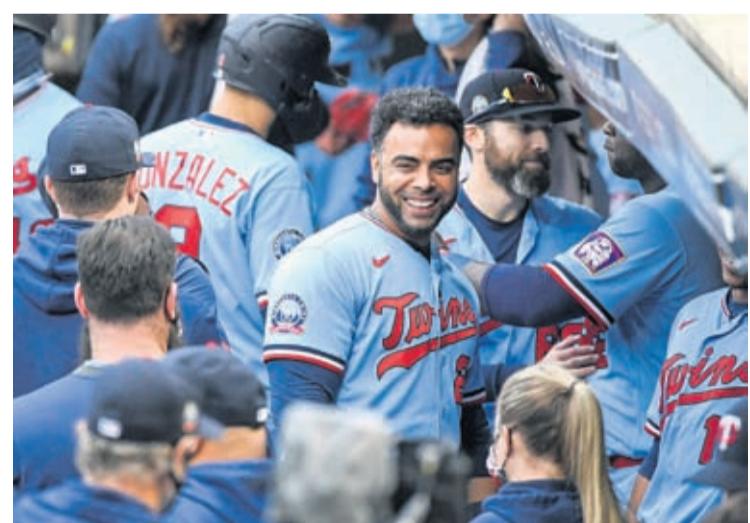
MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Twins are bringing back designated hitter Nelson Cruz on a one-year, \$13 million contract, according to a person with knowledge of the negotiations. The agreement was reached late Tuesday and confirmed Wednesday to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal was pending completion of a physical exam. Cruz turned 40 last season and batted .303 with 16 home runs, 33 RBIs and a .992 OPS in 53 games

during the pandemic-shortened schedule. He has led the team in homers in each of his two years with the Twins while ranking second and fourth, respectively, in the AL in OPS. The six-time All-Star won Silver Slugger awards in 2019 and 2020, when the Twins won the AL Central both seasons.

Just as valuable to the club has been Cruz's leadership, with his laid-back demeanor and hard-working attitude and an ability to mentor players like first baseman Miguel Sanó, a fellow native of the Dominican Republic. Cruz played

through a ruptured tendon in his wrist in 2019. He won the Marvin Miller Man of the Year award in 2020 on a vote by his major league peers, earning respect around the game for his efforts to donate a fire engine and an ambulance and help build a police station in his hometown of Las Matas De Santa Cruz.

No player in the major leagues has more home runs over the last seven seasons than Cruz (260), who also has the third-most RBIs (663) during that span, according to Sportradar data. □



In this Sept. 27, 2020, file photo, Minnesota Twins' Nelson Cruz, center, smiles in the dugout after the Twins clinched the AL Central championship with the Chicago White Sox's loss during the tenth inning of a baseball game in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

Super Bowl could be farewell for several pending free agents

By MARK LONG
AP Pro Football Writer

It's unlikely Patrick Mahomes and Tom Brady will have their same receiving corps next season. Kansas City and Tampa Bay have several starters, including some notable pass catchers, scheduled to become free agents next month. With the NFL salary cap going down for the first time since 2011 — it's projected to decrease by more than \$20 million because of COVID-19 repercussions — teams will have difficult decisions to make in the coming weeks. So the Super Bowl between the Chiefs and Buccaneers will serve as a farewell for several players with their current team. Here's a look at some of the game's most prominent names slated to hit the open market (in alphabetical order):

—Bucs pass rusher Shaq Barrett, who led the NFL with 19½ sacks in 2019, played under a one-year, \$15.9 million franchise tag in 2020. He has 11 sacks this season, including three in the NFC championship game against Green Bay. Tampa is close to \$30 million under the estimated salary cap and might spend a good chunk of it on the 28-year-old linebacker. "I'm not expecting that I would be going anywhere else," said Barrett, who rented a home the last two years and wants to "start laying roots" in Tampa.

—Chiefs running back LeVeon Bell made nearly \$14



Tampa Bay Buccaneers' Shaquil Barrett (58) celebrates with teammate Jason Pierre-Paul after sacking Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers during the second half of the NFC championship NFL football game in Green Bay, Wis., Sunday, Jan. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

million in 2020, with most of that being paid by the New York Jets. He considered signing with Buffalo and Miami before landing in Kansas City, which is unlikely to bring him back. The Chiefs are an estimated \$20 million over the projected cap.

—Bucs receiver Antonio Brown might be out of the league if not for Brady. Brown signed a one-year, \$1.6 million contract with Tampa in late October and has been a model citizen since. Although he might want to test free agency, it's unclear if anyone would take a chance on him.

—Bucs linebacker Lavonte David has been a mainstay in Tampa's lineup for nine years. He's wrap-

ping up a five-year, \$50.25 million deal, but no one would be surprised to see the 31-year-old defensive leader remain in his home state (maybe even at a discounted rate) for the rest of his pro career.

—Tampa Bay running back Leonard Fournette was cut by Jacksonville days before the regular season and landed in Tampa on a one-year, \$2.5 million deal. He has provided a nice 1-2 punch with Ronald Jones, but likely will head elsewhere in hopes of becoming a featured back again. "When I'm healthy, the sky's the limit," Fournette said.

—Bucs receiver Chris Godwin missed several games early this season, but the

2017 third-round draft pick from Penn State has proven his worth with five touchdown catches in the last six games. General manager Jason Licht insists Godwin is in the team's long-term plans.

"I'm very much aware off all those different possibilities, but what I've done this whole season is to not focus on it," Godwin said. "At this point, all of those things are out of my control."

—Veteran tight end Rob Gronkowski came out of retirement to join Brady in Tampa and be close to his mom in Fort Myers. He started every game for the first time since 2011. He has 45 receptions for 623 yards and seven touchdowns after signing a one-year, □

\$9 million deal. If he wants to play another season, the Bucs will find a way to make it work.

—Bucs running back LeSean McCoy has a chance to become the ninth player in NFL history to collect consecutive Super Bowl rings with different teams, joining an exclusive club that includes Deion Sanders and LeGarrette Blount. He's already weighing his future: whether to stick around a little longer as a backup or retire at age 32. "If I get a second championship, with everything I've accomplished, it might be over," he said. "You never know. I'll revisit that later."

—Chiefs receiver Demarcus Robinson is third on the team with a career-high 45 catches after signing a one-year deal to remain in Kansas City.

He hasn't missed a game in five seasons, but the Chiefs wouldn't miss him much if he walked.

—Chiefs safety Daniel Sorenson is having a career year. He led the team with 91 tackles in the regular season to go along with three interceptions. He's on the wrong side of 30, but he would be a bargain at \$4 million a year.

—Bucs defensive lineman Ndamukong Suh made six sacks while starting every game for the ninth consecutive season. He turned 34 last month and might be willing to sign another one-year deal to stay in Tampa. □



In this image from video, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and chief medical adviser to the president, speaks during a White House briefing on the Biden administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

Fauci warns against Super Bowl parties to avoid virus spread

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's top infectious disease expert doesn't want the Super Bowl to turn into a super spreader.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, says when it comes to Super Bowl parties during the pandemic, people should "just lay low and cool it." He said during TV interviews Wednesday that now isn't the time to invite people over for watch par-

ties because of the possibility that they're infected with the coronavirus and could sicken others.

Big events like Sunday's game in Tampa, Florida, between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers are always a cause for concern over the potential for virus spread, Fauci said.

"You don't want parties with people that you

haven't had much contact with," he told NBC's "Today" show. "You just don't know if they're infected, so, as difficult as that is, at least this time around, just lay low and cool it."

The NFL has capped game attendance at 22,000 people because of the pandemic and citywide coronavirus mandates. □